DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 087 857 CE 000 911

TITLE	Parkway Program.
INSTITUTION	Philadelphia School District, Pa.
PUB DATE	Jan 73
NOTE	27p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.85
DESCRIPTORS	Alternative Schools; Educational Finance; Educational Programs; *High Schools; High School Students; *Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation; *Public Schools; Teacher Selection
IDENTIFIERS	*Parkway Program

ABSTRACT

The Parkway Program is the name of a public alternative coeducational high school program for grades 9-12 in Philadelphia. Since student applicants from the entire city exceed openings, they are chosen by lottery, and the result is a wide variation of backgrounds and abilities in the student population. The program, begun in 1969, is committed to operate at a cost equal to, or less than, that required to run a traditional school for a comparable number of students. The program has only administrative headquarters--the city is the classroom, as the students determine their goals in making school experience relevant to their life in the community. Free access to public transportation enables students to reach their classes. Staff members volunteer for the program and are selected by a committee of Parkway teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community resource people. Originally funded by a Ford Foundation planning grant, the Program is now funded by the School District of Philadelphia. Presently the Program is organized in four 200-student units and offers between 100 and 200 courses. Three types of learning situations are available: faculty offerings, institutional offerings, and tutorial. Evaluation of the Program is continuous. (AG)

parkway program

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THE PARKWAY PROGRAM

Looking at the Parkway Program can be a frustrating business. Nearly every question is likely to meet with the same unsatisfying response: "It depends." No description of the Program can pretend to be all inclusive or even entirely accurate, for Parkway is, as a student aptly said, "a state of mind" . . . a state of mind in which learning is perceived not as a subject, a teacher, or a classroom, but as a process which takes place in many forms and in many places . . . a state of mind which suggests that learning can be enjoyable as well as profitable . . . a state of mind which recognises the student's right to make decisions about his own education.

With this state of mind, here is a look at Parkway . . .

A SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS

On February 17, 1969, 143 Philadelphia high school students took to the streets of the city without leaving school. They were the first students of a new high school which challenged many traditional concepts of secondary education. There were no grades, no dress codes and few rules. There was not even a school building. Instead, students found their classrooms, their curricula, and some of their teachers from among the plentiful resources of the city. They went, to learn, where the action was. (The name "Parkway Program" derives from the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, which cuts across the city, and along which lie many of the cultural and scientific institutions whose resources might be tapped for the "school without walls.")

The Parkway Program tested many long accepted principles of educational organization and, while Parkway was not the first to test them, it had three important features which set it apart from other experiments: Parkway was a public program — fully accredited and supported by the School District of Philadelphia; its students were chosen by lottery, from applications submitted by children from all parts of the city; and it was committed to operate at a cost equal to, or less than, that required to run a traditional school for a comparable number of students.

The question was: could the resources of the city be used to educational advantage for a broad cross section of high school students? The answer was never in doubt, but elicited another question: How? The task of the Program was to integrate students with the life of the community — which usually they were not expected to enter until after leaving school. Few urban educators would deny that there were large numbers of students being graduated from high schools unprepared for any useful role in society. They had been so isolated from the community that a practical understanding of how it worked was impossible. Since society would continue to suffer as much as the students, from the failures of the system, it did not seem unreasonable to ask the community to share in creating educational change.

If cultural, business and scientific institutions were to teach students, it was clear that those involved would have to learn to operate in new ways. Neither the educational system nor the community could do the job alone.

What was needed was a structure in which the two could interact . . . in which school and community professionals could combine abilities to provide students with the most profitable educational experience possible. If such cooperation were to be achieved, schools would have to stop operating by rules which differed from those of the larger society. The structure of the classroom would have to change. The student could not be expected

to go from a passive, unresponsive role in class to an active, effective one in the city. Rather than encourage acceptance, school would have to teach challenge. Rather than teach success through compliance and dependence, school would have to show that action and independence could bring satisfying results. Teachers would have to teach differently because in a "school without walls" the students might need to use, in the afternoon, the skills they had learned in the morning.

The objective of the Parkway Program was no less than to put the school in step with the community so that students could operate effectively in both.

The development of Parkway's "restructured" program would have to be as much the work of the students as of the administrators, for students were essential for developing the answer to "what do students want to know." The students would have to take an active role in planning and administering their program, for it would be <u>their</u> goals which would determine the future directions of the Program.

Parkway was not designed to be a school of the future. Parkway was created to be a school for now — a school which would be able to keep up with the "now" as the future became the now.

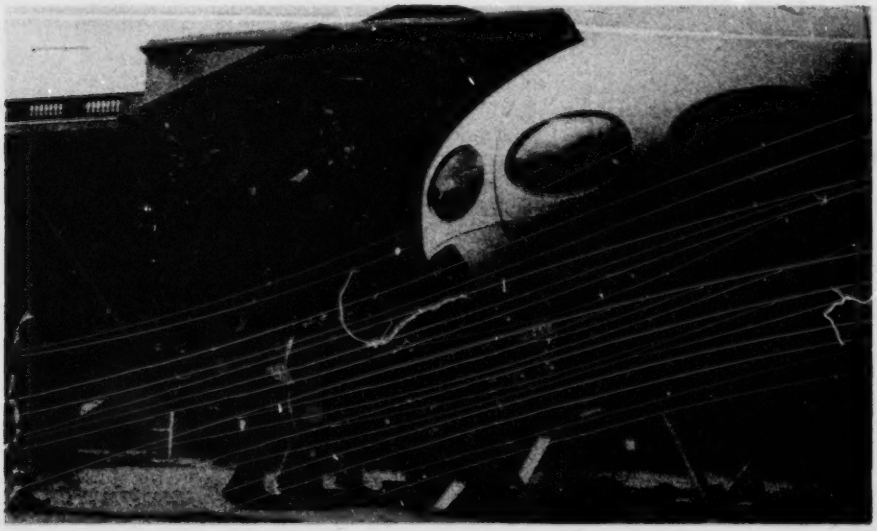
WHERE PARKWAY OPERATES

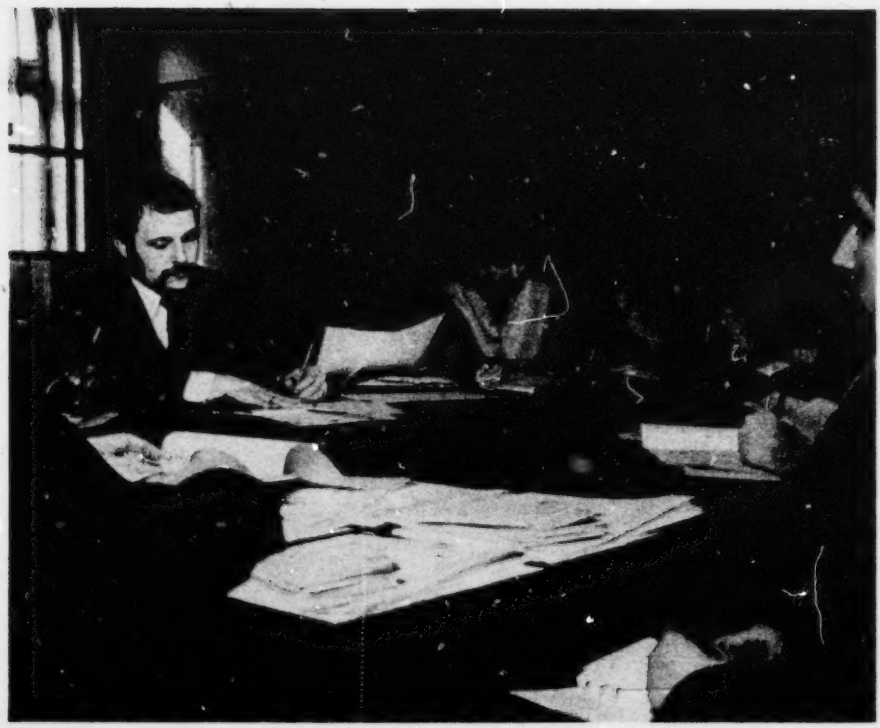
One of the unique aspects of Parkway is that it has no school building, merely small administrative headquarters.

The first obligation of Parkway people is to find space for classes. This responsibility is shared by all members of the Program and is considered an educational activity, requiring a thorough investigation of the city and its spatial resources.

The city offers a vast assortment of learning labs: art at the Art Museum, biology at the Zoo, business and vocational courses at on-the-job sites (journalism at a newspaper, mechanics at a garage). Academic classes meet in churches, business conference rooms, vacant offices, public lobbies, and even in private homes. In good weather, Philadelphia's parks become the classrooms for many courses. Parkway students rarely pass an empty building without trying to find out who owns it and if Parkway can "borrow" it. The Program searches for "wasted space" – a space maintained for 24 hours a day but used for only a portion of that time.

In going from class to class students travel the city and may take instruction in as many as four or five different places in the course of a day. Walking becomes a way of life, but, for distances too far to walk, the Program provides its students with free tokens for public transportation.





STAFF

The Program maintains a student-teacher ratio of approximately 20/1, and for every certified teacher, a college or university intern (graduate or undergraduate) is added to the staff.

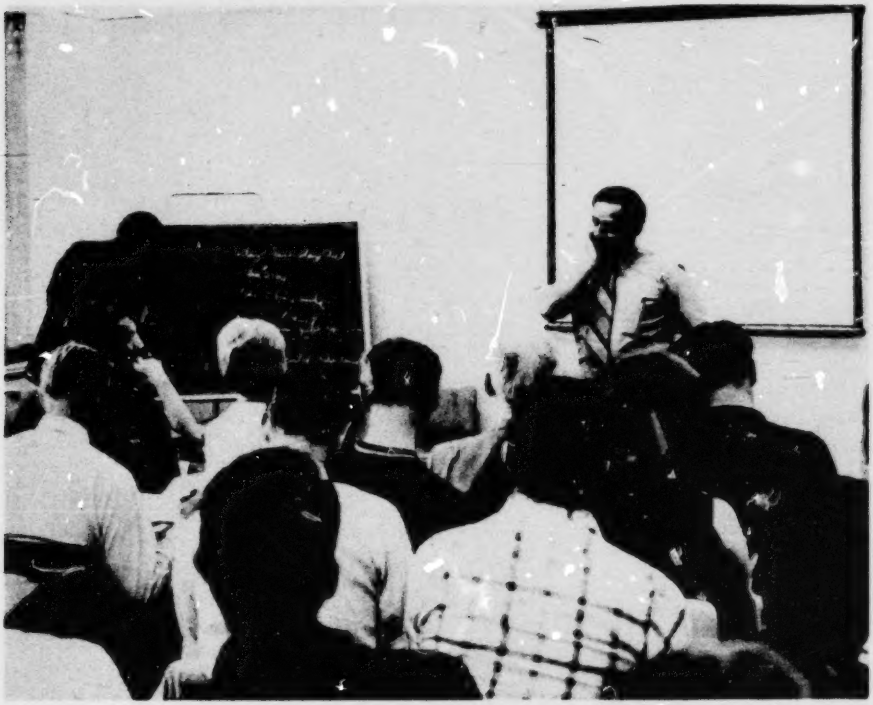
Like students, staff members volunteer for the Program. Applicants are interviewed and recommended for staff positions by committees composed of Parkway teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community resource people. Parkway teachers must meet certification requirements and many have taught in traditional schools.

Staff members are responsible for developing and teaching the basic curriculum, recruiting additional instructional activities and materials from the community, and for counseling students. A Parkway teacher's day is likely to be divided among classroom teaching, student counseling, and administrative work — with the staff member determing the proportions in accordance with the needs of the unit and his own skills.

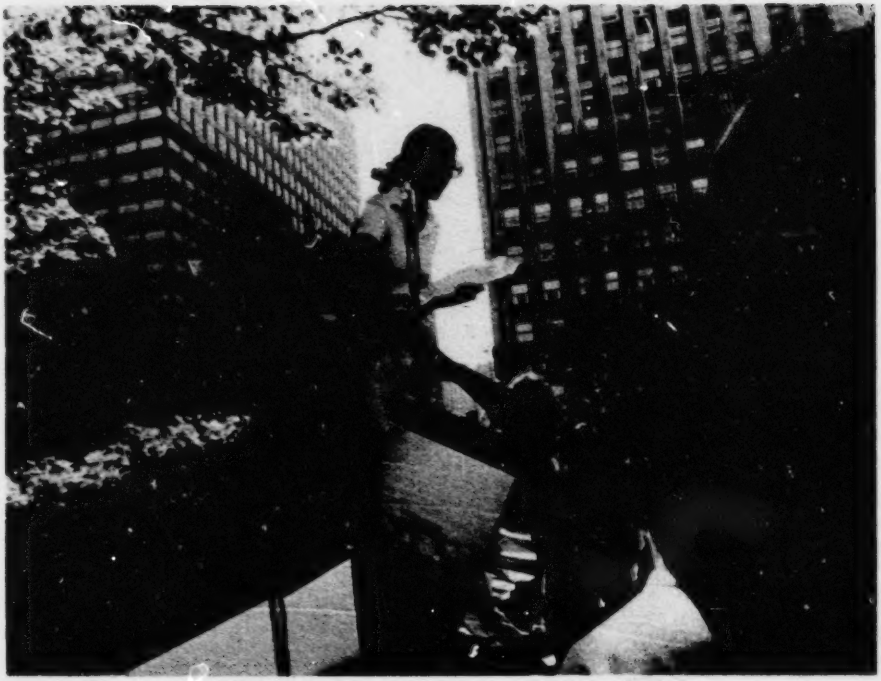
FUNDING

Parkway Program was established on a Ford Foundation planning grant, and within a year its operational expenses were assumed by the School District of Philadelphia. Additional funding is sought from private sources to develop organizational models for expansion, to devise an evaluation model which will determine Parkway's long range effect, and to finance special efforts which are not ordinarily covered in school budgets (e.g., dissemination of information to interested educators).

The costs of Parkway, on a per student basis, are roughly equal to those of traditional high schools in Philadelphia. As the Program expands, it is anticipated that it can be operated at a lower per pupil cost than that of traditional schools because it does not require the provision and maintenance of buildings, equipment and grounds.



STUDENT SELECTION



Parkway is open to any Philadelphia student, in grade nine through twelve, who wants to come. Motivation and parental consent are the only requirements.

If, as has always been the case, more students apply for admission than the Program can accommodate, a lottery is held. An equal number of places is allocated to each of the eight geographically determined school districts in Philadelphia so that a heterogeneous representation is insured within the Program's student population, a limited number of places is made available to private, parochial and suburban schools. These places are also filled by lottery.

ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION

The Parkway Program is organized into "units" or "communities" of 200 students each, and presently has four such units in separate locations throughout the city. We believe that bigness breeds anonymity and impersonal relationships, therefore, when Parkway expands it does so by creating new units rather than by enlarging existing ones. Each unit, to a large degree, calls upon the resources of its own geographic area, thus spreading the community involvement, and also assuring a slightly different "flavor" for each unit.

Each unit has its own staff and administrative headquarters and develops its own curriculum. While units base their operation on a Parkway Program Design, each unit interprets that Design according to the needs of the unit population, and the available resources. Day to day administrative functions are performed by unit staff and students under the guidance of a unit head. As new units are created, staff and students first face the job of setting up a working organization suited to their needs and abilities.

Unit operations are supported by a small central staff working with the Director. This group is primarily concerned with planning and development, maintenance of inter-unit communications, and the coordination of certain cross-unit activities.

CURRICULUM

The Parkway student finds between 100 and 200 courses available at the beginning of each twelve week quarter. Each unit publishes its own catalogue, every quarter, which shows its own offerings as well as many Program-wide courses. Students must meet state requirements for graduation, but options in each subject area are wide, and students are free to select their own ways of approaching a field of study. In English there might be, among many courses offered, Shakespeare, TV production and Basic Reading Skills. American History credit might be earned by studying the American Civil War or Municipal Government. Math could be algebra, accounting, computer programming or retail merchandising. Science might be biology, physics, or field work in a local hospital. The choice in each case is the student's and is made after a thorough examination of his goals, needs and interests. It is the faculty's job to see that students make this analysis with support and guidance.

The Parkway curriculum is designed to provide both cognitive and affective learning situations through faculty offerings, institutional offerings and the Tutorial.

FACULTY OFFERINGS are those courses taught by Parkway staff and interns. They represent the basic curriculum and are approximately one half of the courses available. All major academic and commercial areas are covered, with many staff members taking the opportunity to teach in sub-areas in which they have special interest: e.g., 17th Century poets, the history of civil disobedience, the ecology of the city, etc. It is because the Program encourages its teachers to work in areas of interest within their special fields that the selection of course offerings more resembles a college catalogue than the usual high school course list. Curricular flexibility also enables each faculty member to work up to his or her greatest potential, with everyone in the Program benefiting.

INSTITUTIONAL OFFERINGS are those courses taught by individuals and institutions in the community. They are recruited by Parkway students, staff, and parents, as interests are recognized within the units. (e.g., student interest in medically related professions led to the establishment of a series of courses in local hospitals and clinics.) Many vocational learning

experiences are developed in the community. Auto mechanics is taught in a garage by garage employees, art students study at the Art Museum and local art colleges with museum and college staffs, journalism students study with reporters at a newspaper, a practicing architect teaches architecture, housewives teach home economics, a local jeweler teaches gemology, a large industry teaches business management, etc., etc. Parkway students have studied leathercraft, veterinary medicine, Swahili, child psychology, and many other subjects. If a student interested in cemetary management were to enter the Program, doubtless someone in that field could be found to help. Given the resources of an urban center, no subject is impossible to offer. Community teachers are not paid. They are motivated by an interest in education, and concern for the future of their own fields, which often have felt the shortage of adequately trained personnel. Industries, businesses and professions are concerned about developing interest in their fields as early as possible. To the student, the advantage of "trying on" a variety of occupations, while still in school, is enormous. "Turned off" by the system, a student may find his interest in academic subjects rekindled by studying a specialized subject, because there is an opportunity to see a practical application of academic skills.

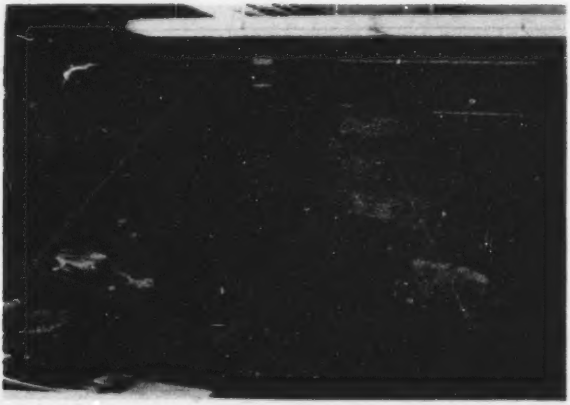
TUTORIAL is the family base of the Program and consists of a group of 20 students, a staff member and an intern. Tutorial is central to the successful operation of the Program. It is: a basic skills unit in which all students are provided with any needed support in English and math; a guidance group in which the tutorial leader helps students plan their courses; an evaluation unit in which the objectives and progress of the student and the Program are regularly discussed; and a human relations group where students learn to work effectively with a group which is likely to contain people of very different backgrounds and life styles. (Learning to function under these conditions is not easy, but it is perhaps the most important aspect of Parkway.)

Activities in Tutorials are determined by the group, and may vary widely from day to day, from Tutorial to Tutorial, and from Unit to Unit. Tutorials may be doing completely different things at the same time. One group might be planning a lunch program while another concentrates on math skills – another might be working out details of a trip and still another studying the question of alternatives to college. Other Tutorial members might be working on individual projects with the Tutorial Leader. The important thing is that the group define and approach problems in ways which will benefit all those in the Tutorial – whether individually or collectively.

In addition to formal learning situations, students are involved in activities which help run Parkway. The procedure is simple: a specific problem is identified or a question raised and a group organizes itself to deal with it. The purposes are to involve students in the administration of the Program in a genuinely servicable way, and to develop leadership and management skills. Groups have undertaken ways to improve intra- and inter-unit communications, work in public relations, locating class space, discovering who <u>really</u> has the power at Parkway. Groups do not always succeed with their tasks, but failures often prove as educational as successes when students identify reasons for failure and re-structure their approaches accordingly.

Periodically, all members of a unit join in town meeting to discuss, fight about, and perhaps solve, problems facing the unit. Town meetings may be chaired by a student, an intern or a teacher. An agenda is prepared and the items discussed. These may range from how to get a water cooler to a discussion of whether or not teachers should have veto power. Town meetings provide lessons in group organization (and group frustration) and are often starting points for the development of problem-solving groups.

From all these activities -- Tutorial, classroom and community courses, town meetings and problem solving groups -- the Parkway student makes his schedule. With so much available to do, it is not surprising that many Parkway students commit themselves to long school days, often starting before nine and ending after five. Because opportunities are unlimited few students fall into tedious routine. As one student put it, "It is better than regular school but tougher because you're on your own. No one tells you what to do and how to do it -- you have to decide for yourself. You make the decisions, you take the responsibility. That's just the way it is."



EVALUATION

At Parkway evaluation is an on-going process which involves the student as much as the teacher. In many respects it is the central course of study; students constantly evaluate their goals, needs and objectives in order to choose courses, and they evaluate the effect of their choices in light of needs and interests. Evaluation is a daily activity, not a post-mortem.

Formal evaluation takes place at the end of each twelve week quarter. It may take up to two weeks and is considered a part of the curriculum – without which the other parts would be pointless. Students and faculty assess their own, each other's, and the Program's process. No letter grades or marks are assigned. Rather, earned credit is granted. Each student's record is composed of documents written by the teacher and the student for each course or activity in which the student is involved. Evaluations include the instructor's description of the course and his or her evaluation of the student's work; the student's evaluation of the course material, his or her own progress in the course, and an evaluation of the teacher (which may include suggestions for improvement). A complete set of evaluations for each quarter becomes part of the student's permanent record and a duplicate set is sent to his family.

Some scholar may want someday to review the development of Parkway and compare the changes which have taken place with those suggested in evaluations. The probability is that there would be a high degree of correlation, for Parkway courses have been abolished or initiated, teaching methods changed, and curriculum altered, in response to opinions expressed in evaluations. Such development is for the Program's benefit, for no student can be expected to learn or grow in a situation which will not grow with him.

Innovative, student-centered school programs have been instituted, in abundance, over the years; but generally they have been limited to the private school sector and have dealt withan "elite" constituency. Not until the public school systems develop programs to stimulate, educate, and encourage the heterogeneous mass of students will the problems of urban education begin to be solved.

Philadelphia's Parkway Program is a beginning. Controversial though it is, it has received the support of the system (without which it could not have been created), and remarkable cooperation from institutions, individuals, foundations and industries (without which it would cease to exist).

Dozens of cities now have programs modeled after Parkway and we are proud to have spearheaded an educational movement which offers so much for so many.

January, 1973

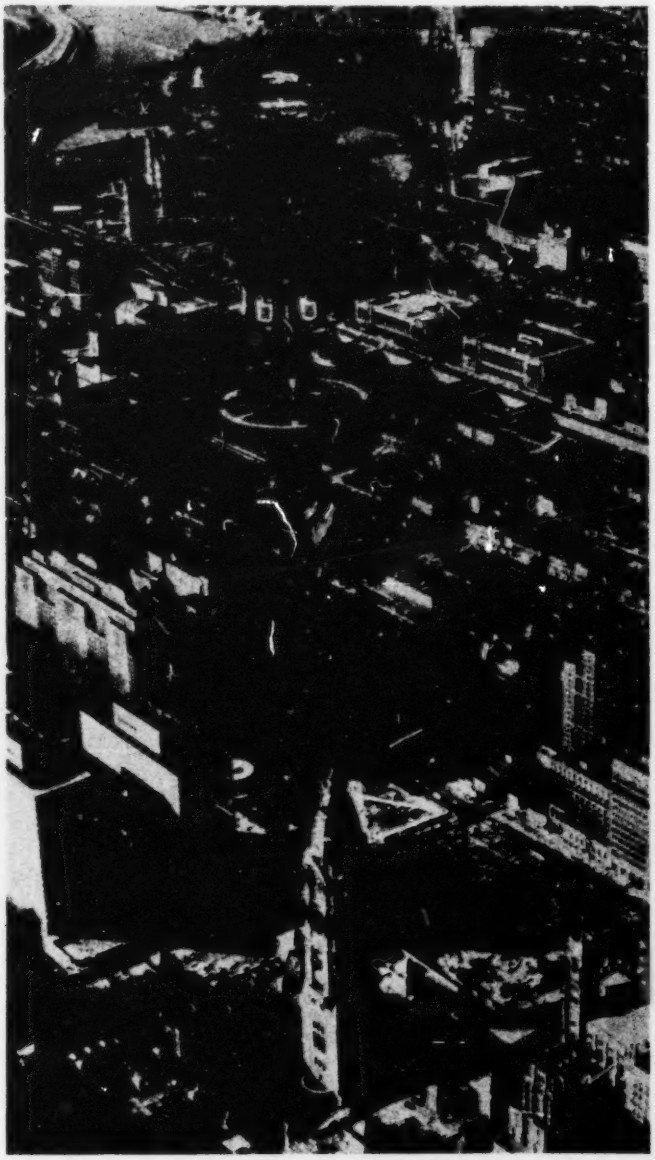
Those interested in further details may write for
DESIGN FOR A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Address: The Parkway Program
c/o The Franklin Institute
20th & Parkway
Philadelphia, Penna. 19103

and enclose .50 to cover cost of handling and mailing.

The Parkway Program

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA



RECORD OF .....

UNIT .....

DATE .....

DIRECTOR' OFFICE
Stevens School, Room 308
13th and Spring Garden Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19123
(215) MA 7-3266
Director: Robert C. Hutchins

ALPHA UNIT
1801 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Unit Head: Eric C. Oxley
Guidance Counselors:
Flora Eikerenkoetter/
Claudette Levitt

BETA UNIT
125 North 23rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Unit Head: Julius C. Bennett
Guidance Counselor: Julius C. Bennett

GAMMA UNIT
913 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Unit Head: Joseph A. Jacovino
Guidance Counselor: Donna Epstein

DELTA UNIT
6008 Wayne Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19144
Unit Head: Ella Travis
Guidance Counselor: Phillip Parrish

We would like to introduce you to the PARKWAY PROGRAM ,begun in 1969 as a public alternative to traditional education in Philadelphia.

PARKWAY IS DIFFERENT. There are five distinctive features of the Program that set it apart from the traditional high school.

First: PARKWAY'S STUDENTS COME BECAUSE THEY WANT TO... not because they have to. So many students apply from Philadelphia's eight subdistricts, parochial, private and suburban schools that it is impossible to admit them all. Consequently, students are chosen by lottery.

Second: PARKWAY'S POPULATION IS DIVERSIFIED... since Parkway draws from such a wide geographic area. Students of varying backgrounds and abilities share views and life styles.

Third: PARKWAY'S EDUCATIONAL APPROACH STRESSES FREEDOM WITH RESPONSIBILITY... by having students design their programs to suit their own interests, needs and ability levels. The basic high school curriculum is augmented by courses taught by volunteers from the professional, business and industrial communities. Choices are made from catalogues much in the manner of college. Of the more than 350 courses offered in 1972-73, 185 were taught by community people.

All classes are held in facilities volunteered by the community. Students are responsible for meeting commitments to self-selected schedules regardless of where classes are held.

The Program stresses that increased opportunity and liberty bring with them increased responsibility. Therefore students are encouraged to participate in the administration of the school.

Fourth: PARKWAY'S TEACHERS ARE SPECIAL... since they, too, come at their own option. In addition to meeting certification requirements, all candidates are screened by committees of staff, students, parents and administrators. The staff reflects both experience in traditional education and training in new approaches.

Fifth: PARKWAY'S GRADING SYSTEM IS NON-COMPETITIVE... because a student's work is assessed in terms of his/her potential rather than in terms of the group's standards. Students do not receive letter or number grades. Rather, credit is granted for work satisfactorily completed. Comprehensive written evaluations indicate academic and social growth.

FACTS ABOUT PARKWAY

Kind of School ..... Public Alternative Co-ed High School

Accreditation ..... Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Enrollment ..... 850 full-time students

Grades ..... 9 through 12 ungraded

School Plant ..... The City of Philadelphia

POST-HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES OF THE CLASSES OF 1972 and 1973

ACTIVITY	1972		1973	
	No. of Students	%age of Class	No. of Students	%age of Class
Employment, Travel, etc.	53	34	65*	37
Armed Services	1	1	0	0
Tech/Trade Trg. (continuing ed.)	5	3	10	6
Registered Nurse Training	3	2	0	0
College, Jr. College or Associate Degree Institutions	93	60	100	57
TOTALS	155	100	175	100

*Many of these students are planning to enter institutions of higher learning next year.

S.A.T. INFORMATION FOR 1973

No. of Students Who Took SATs 120

Scores:

	VERBAL	MATH
High	690	690
Low	210	240
Median	450	430

DEGREE GRANTING INSTITUTIONS ACCEPTING PARKWAY PROGRAM GRADUATES

Albany State College
American College of Jerusalem
Antioch College
Aquinas College
Bard College
Barnard College
Beaver College
Bennington College
Bethel College
Boston College
Boston Museum School of Fine Arts
Boston University
Brandeis University
Bucks County Community College
California College of Arts and Crafts
California State University of Pennsylvania
Cheyney State College
Coe College
College of Pharmacy (Philadelphia)
Colorado University
Combs College of Music
Community College of Philadelphia
Cornell University
Creighton University
Culinary Institute of America
Delaware Valley Academy
Drexel University
Earlham College
East Stroudsburg State College
Emerson College
ERA Institute
Evergreen College
Goddard College
Goucher College
Graham Junior College
Hampshire College
Harcum Junior College
Hofstra University
Howard University
Indiana State University of Pennsylvania
Ithaca University
Johnston College
Kirkland College
Knox College
LaSalle College
Lehigh University
Mansfield State College
Marietta College
McAllister University
Montgomery County Community College
Moore College of Art
New York University
Northeastern University
Northern Michigan University
Ohio State University
Ohio Weslyan College
Park College
Pennsylvania State University
Philadelphia School of Office Training
Prescott College
Princeton University
Rhode Island School of Design
Roger Williams College
St. Augustine's College
Santa Rosa Junior College
Sarah Lawrence College
Shaw University
Shimer College
Skidmore College
Swarthmore College
Syracuse University
Temple University
Tufts University
Universities of:
- Chicago
- Connecticut
- Denver
- Maryland
- Miami
- Michigan
- Montana
- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Tampa
- Wisconsin

Utica College
Vassar College
Villanova University
Virginia Union College
Washington College
West Virginia State College
Wheelock College
Widener College
Wilmington College
Windum College
Yale University
York University (Canada)